

EXHIBIT 1

OKLAHOMA CITY - There are allegations of wrong doing against one of the most powerful politicians in the State of Oklahoma. Attorney General, Drew Edmondson, is being accused of retaliation against an attorney inside his own office.

It all started when a lawyer inside the attorney general's office spoke up. The allegations are alarming and they go all the way to the top; to the Attorney General, Drew Edmondson, himself.

The Attorney General's office has said from the beginning that there's no validity to the claims. They say this is not a case of a victimized whistleblower, but a case of a disgruntled employee blowing things way out of proportion.

The Oklahoma Attorney General's office is getting a lot of attention these days on the subject of protecting Oklahoma's scenic rivers

Drew Edmondson filed a lawsuit against some big-time poultry companies in Arkansas. He says they need to pay for polluting our rivers and destroying the eastern Oklahoma watershed.

Attorney, Marie West, went to work for the AG's office because of issues like poultry farm pollution.

"The reason I took the job was to make a difference for the better," Marie West says.

She was an Assistant Attorney General in the environmental protection unit of the AG's office. West was the assigned lawyer for two state agencies working on the poultry pollution issues, but after only nine months on the job, Marie West says she was forced to leave.

West says, "If someone would have told me that this had happened to them, I would've said, I didn't believe it."

West says the trouble started when she blew the whistle on what she calls unethical behavior inside Drew Edmondson's office.

She claims she was asked to lie, to spy on, and to give shoddy legal advice to the very state agencies she was employed to represent.

Marie West says, "I always felt like my two state agencies were the ones that were truly trying to do what they're being paid to do, which is look out for the best interests of the citizens of the state of Oklahoma. And Drew was the one that is compromising that and using very unethical tactics to do so."

West spoke up about those tactics to her supervisor, the chief of the unit. She says that supervisor retaliated.

In this request for assistance, Marie West asks for a transfer because of what she calls "constant ridicule, threats, harassment and public humiliation."

"I looked to Drew for help; thinking that he would help me. I asked to be transfered outside of my division and continue working with my two agencies," West says.

The Attorney General's office denied Marie's transfer, calling her an inexperienced attorney who refused to accept supervision.

Attorney General Spokesperson, Charlie Price says, "We did look into the allegations and found them to be baseless."

One week after Marie complained, she left the office and never came back.
The reason was a hate letter mailed to the office.

The author calls Attorney West excessively selfish, a rich daddy's girl, a spoiled brat, a boring c*** and a**hole.

The language is vulgar. Some of it, like this line about West's mother, "Was your mother a c*** or is this all your originality?" is so offensive, NewsChannel 4 cannot share it in its entirety.

West says, "I know that my supervisor at the time had written it because the things she put in the letter are so awful and those are the things I dealt with on an everyday basis when I was called into her office."

From the beginning, Marie West pointed the finger at her supervisor, the chief of the unit. The Attorney General's office pointed the finger back at her.

The author could never conclusively be identified. The letter was never fingerprinted, nor was there any DNA testing or handwriting analysis.

The Attorney General's Office tells us they did launch an extensive investigation to find out who wrote the letter to Attorney West.

Charlie Price, with the AG's office says, "There was an extensive investigation and the author of that letter could not be determined, but we did confirm it did not come from inside the office.

We are protecting a legal secretary's identity. She fears retaliation for speaking out. She is the one who opened the hate letter addressed to Marie West.

The paralegal says, "I was a legal secretary for the environmental protection unit, I was just... I couldn't believe what I was reading."

Moments after it arrived, when the paralegal called the state capitol to report the letter, she says she was asked to lie about where it arrived and about the fact that she had seen it.

She was told not breathe a word about the letter to Marie West.

The paralegal says, "If it was sent to myself, I would want to know these threats; these things that were being written. It was very deceitful to do this to a person, but I didn't want to be part of that deceit. I had no respect at that point for how things were being handled."

Marie West didn't find out about the letter until the next day.

That's also when the paralegal told West that she was instructed to lie about the letter. The legal secretary gave, what's called a sworn statement, to Marie West about that letter.

That statement cost the paralegal her job.

"I was fired because I went against what they wanted me to do," She says. "It's difficult to come forth, but I couldn't have lived with myself otherwise. I didn't want to be a part of the Attorney General's Office if that's how they operated."

According to the Attorney General's Office, the legal secretary was never asked to lie. She was fired because the sworn statement was a violation of office policy.

Marie West filed a federal lawsuit against the Attorney General's Office. She also sued Drew Edmondson, his first assistant and the Chief of the Environmental Unit, Marie's supervisor. The lawsuit was filed three years ago, but it came to a head this year.

First, a federal judge dismissed part of the suit. The claims against Drew Edmondson, the first assistant and the office were all thrown out.

The claim against that supervisor was still alive in federal court. That is, until the state offered up a deal.

According to the settlement agreement, the state would pay Marie West \$45,000 to end the case for good.

A secrecy clause would prevent Marie West from talking about the case and she would have to take confidential documents and have them destroyed.

Charlie Price says, "There was a decision made that it would be in the best interest of the state to settle this for nuisance value. Save the state money. Even though we firmly believe we would have prevailed in court."

The settlement was signed by Drew Edmondson and two assistant attorneys general, but it was never signed by Marie West.

As the case appeared to be making its way through the settlement process there was another twist.

Jim West is Marie's father. He first got involved in her case when the Attorney General's Office asked for a deposition.

In that deposition Jim West was questioned about financing his daughter's litigation and he was questioned about his own finances.

Jim West says, "As we were sitting there in the deposition, I got concerned because I thought, Why am I being questioned so heavily on the companies when it didn't have anything to do with her case whatsoever."

Jim West owns six Oklahoma-based companies. He says they all have a spotless record.

One of those companies, TNT, is now at the center of an investigation by the Attorney General's Office.

Jim West says, "To have somebody attack me like the Attorney General's Office because they can't get what they want from my daughter, I guess they figure they can get it one way or another."

Josh Welch is Jim West's attorney, he says, "These actions are clearly the product of the Attorney General's Office hostility toward Jim West funding his daughter's litigation."

Attorney Welch is helping Jim West fight the AG's office in the ongoing legal battle.

"Jim West has done business in Oklahoma for 45 years and it's only after he gives a deposition in his daughter's lawsuit against Drew Edmondson that his life becomes a living hell," Josh Welch says.

The Attorney General's Office confirms that TNT is the focus of a multi-county grand jury investigation. However, they say they were asked to investigate them by another state agency.

Charlie Price says, "As far as we knew there was no connection between TNT and anyone involved in the Marie West case. It was not until an attorney from TNT contacted our office that we learned there was a connection."

If they are true, the accusations are disturbing.

Josh Welch says, "If you question authority, or if you support someone in your family, you could face retribution by someone as powerful as Drew Edmondson in the Attorney General's Office."

The Attorney General's Office says the accusations are hard to believe because they are fabricated. They say a federal judge has already ruled in their favor.

Price says, "The courts have looked at this. The courts have said these allegations are baseless. They are without merit and there's no evidence to support this."

If you'd have asked the West family five years ago, even they say they wouldn't have believed the story they now tell.

Now a father feels like he was forced to fight a giant because he went to the mat for his daughter.

"I spent 45 years; a lifetime putting these companies together and they're going try and tear them down in months," Jim West says.

And now there is an attorney who calls herself the victim of retaliation because she spoke up.

Marie West says, "I was warned. I was warned early on that if I were to bring this lawsuit that I should be concerned."

Marie never signed the settlement and she never got a dime for her claims.

And now we are left with wholly unanswered questions. Is Marie West an employee with a grudge and a fantastic story or is this a case of abuse of authority in the office of the state's most powerful attorney.

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